

Strategy Research Project

Securing East Asia's Future by Rebalancing the U.S. – Japan Alliance

by

Colonel John M. Peck
United States Marine Corps



United States Army War College
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Colonel John M. Peck
United States Marine Corps

Captain James E. Boswell
Department of National Security and Strategy
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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Securing East Asia's Future by Rebalancing the U.S. – Japan Alliance

The concurrent rise of historical East Asia regional competitors, Japan and China, presents new challenges and opportunities for the U.S. as it rebalances its foreign policy focus to the Pacific after more than a decade of war in the Middle East and central Asia. Maintaining regional stability for continued economic growth is a central theme as the U.S.–Japan alliance objectives shift from cold war containment of communism. In an October 2011 visit to Japan, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta called the U.S.-Japan alliance “a cornerstone of regional security and stability that’s critical to addressing challenges such as North Korea and China” and that “the ties between our two countries will only grow and deepen as America increases its engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.”¹

But as Japan’s gridlocked politicians struggle to come to grips with a post-Cold War security environment featuring a nuclear-armed North Korea, a rising China, and unresolved territorial disputes with three of its neighbors, the United States continues to accept the majority of the risk and responsibility in maintaining the U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty. The increasingly tense Senkaku Islands territorial dispute threatens to expose this risk as the U.S. is obligated by treaty to defend the Japanese islands against advances by China and Taiwan who are asserting their own competing claims. Japanese leaders fully expect the U.S. to fulfill its obligations to defend Japan, even as they strive to reduce the burden of supporting U.S. forces required to uphold that obligation. The 2011 Japanese defense budget was \$59.3 billion – the 6th largest in the world and 2nd largest in Asia, after China. But can this force be relied on to defend an attack on American people and property, or those of other partner nations in the Asia-Pacific region? Presently, the answer is no.

The purpose of this paper is to explain how defense planners can strengthen the U.S. – Japan mutual defense treaty in meaningful ways that operationalize the alliance and provide a foundation for continued security and stability of East Asia, and why Japanese constitutional reform is critical to this effort. Given the significant historical and cultural challenges resulting from Japan’s violent history with its neighbors, this paper will also discuss how the U.S. and Japan can work to shape a regional environment accommodating to the peaceful normalization of Japan.

Over the past decade, the alliance has revised guidelines to expand Japan’s noncombatant role in regional and international contingencies, and is continuing progress on the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), intended to reduce the burden of U.S. presence on the Japanese population. Both nations have also aligned broad regional and global objectives such as eradicating terrorism, protection of space and cyber space, and strengthening international cooperation on disaster prevention and relief.²

But despite progress in both capability and willingness to project its Self Defense Forces forward, three critical elements of the alliance remain ambiguous – the roles and responsibilities of U.S. and Japanese forces in the defense of Japan, the level of interoperability between these forces and Japanese limitations on mutual defense. Japan’s constitutional ban on war restricts, among other things, the right of collective defense – the ability to defend an ally under attack. “The U.S. position, in essence, is that the alliance should be more operationally capable of defending Japan —particularly in a way that increasingly includes Japan playing the lead role in its own defense.”³ This includes increasing capabilities that can be applied not only to the defense of

Japan, but in support of other regional and global contingencies affecting both nations' interests. Operation Tomodachi, in March 2011, marked the first operational combined joint task force (CJTF) between U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) and the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) and exposed fundamental interoperability issues between the two nations that could adversely affect combined operations against a determined enemy.

Background

Article 9 of Japan's constitution states that the "Japanese people forever renounce war as the sovereign right of the nation," in order that international disputes may be resolved by peaceful means based on order and justice. It further states, "Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."⁴ American lawyers drafted this constitution under the direction of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Douglas MacArthur, after Japan's defeat in WWII because the Japanese version was viewed as too conservative and aligned with the former Meiji Constitution. The intent was to ensure the "Japanese Government ... remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people."⁵ This new American version was presented to the public as a creation of its own government and despite shocking the Japanese conservative elites, "tapped into popular aspirations for peace and democracy in quite remarkable ways."⁶ Despite the irony of U.S. authorship, the constitution remains un-amended today amid continued tension between the U.S. and Japan over the limits it places on the employment, capacity and capability of Japan's Self Defense Forces.

The JSDF derived from the National Police Reserve in 1954 and includes air, ground and maritime components. "The SDF is not considered of war making potential

and is only for self-defense...The Japanese government's position is that anything that exceeds the nature of self defense...would become military power, and therefore unconstitutional.”⁷ This interpretation is what prevents the JSDF from engaging in collective self-defense. It also means that JSDF personnel are unable to use weapons unless absolutely necessary to defend themselves, similar to the rules of engagement applied to police.

The original U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was signed in September 1951 during the Allied occupation of Japan and formally ended the state of war between the two nations. This treaty was provisional in many respects and did not specifically commit the U.S. to defend Japan. The constitutional restraints were exposed even at this early stage as a roadblock to an equitable treaty, but fearing loss of forward basing if Japan declared neutrality, the treaty was amended in 1960 to formally acknowledge the U.S. responsibility to defend Japan. In exchange, Japan agreed to fund and provide base support that was deemed critical in supporting the U.S. cold war containment strategy.

A reciprocal promise of defense of the U.S. was not legally or politically tenable because of Article 9 restraints, however the alliance was strengthened over time through a shared perception of mutual cooperation should war erupt in East Asia that was codified in 1978 through the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. Under the provisions of this agreement the U.S. would provide the “spear” and Japan would provide the “shield” for defense of Japan. The Self Defense Forces would secure maritime shipping lanes up to 1000 miles from Japan and increase its minesweeping, anti-submarine, patrol and surveillance capability against soviet submarines.⁸ This arrangement worked well during the Cold War period without a hostile regional

competitor to threaten Japan or the maritime shipping lanes in and around its territorial waters. Since the end of the Cold War, however, several regional events have caused Japan to re-assess its defense posture and test the limits of its pacifist constitution.

In 1993 Japan was shocked when it learned of North Korea's ballistic missile test into the Sea of Japan and again in 1996 when the Chinese fired four missiles off Taiwan's northern coast. While neither act was intended to provoke Japan, they did instill a sense of vulnerability that finally spawned action to pursue a missile defense capability after another North Korean missile launch in 1998. Subsequent U.S.-Japan cooperation on missile, radar and computer weapon system technology under the Japanese Cooperative Development (JCD) program resulted in Japan being the first U.S. ally to attain the cutting edge Aegis Missile Defense capability.⁹ Today, Japan's sophisticated integrated air defenses include sixteen land-based Patriot firing units and Aegis ship-based SM-3 intermediate range missile interceptors with plans to upgrade its Atago class destroyers with SM-3 Block IIA missiles.¹⁰ The crews on both U.S. and Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) Aegis ships share common warning radar feeds and targeting data as well as tactics, techniques and procedures. However, aiding other nations with missile defense is prohibited since, according to its constitution, "Japan cannot intercept a missile that is not specifically directed at its territory."¹¹ This restriction is attributed to the constitutional ban on engaging in collective defense and according to former Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Program Director, Admiral Alan B. Hicks "the issue of engagement is where it's going to take a lot more time."¹²

Despite domestic pressures on the alliance in the mid-90s resulting from a large Japanese budget deficit and the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl, more progress was

made in 1996 when President Clinton agreed to return Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, in Okinawa, and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto agreed to provide logistical support to U.S. forces during peacetime for training, joint exercises, and humanitarian missions.¹³ Additional changes to the 1978 defense agreement soon followed and prescribed mutual cooperation under four scenarios including “situations in areas surrounding Japan,” as well as participation in relief activities, conducting search and rescue operations, intelligence gathering, surveillance and minesweeping, and offering use of JSDF facilities and other logistical support.¹⁴ While Japan had previously deployed minesweepers to the Persian Gulf in 1991 and ground forces to Cambodia in 1992 in support of disaster assistance, these changes paved the way for increased deployments of JSDF personnel to support regional and international operations.

After September 11th 2001, Japan’s Diet passed measures allowing the deployment of JMSDF forces to the Indian Ocean in support of refueling operations for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and to Iraq in support of re-construction efforts after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Over the course of several deployments in support of both United Nations (U.N.) operations and the U.S. in the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Japan’s leaders have come to acknowledge that “the national interest may sometimes lie far from home and that the constitutional taboo on sending Japanese troops abroad can in fact be broken.”¹⁵ However, despite the increasing willingness to participate in re-construction, disaster response and other humanitarian missions, Japan’s restrictive rules of engagement limit the utility of these forces. These limitations were manifested during OEF when JSDF personnel had to be protected by the Australian Army and in South Sudan when the U.N. commander arranged for the

JSDF to be protected by the Rwandan Army. “The fact that highly trained and well equipped troops from one of the world’s richest ... countries were forced to rely on soldiers with questionable training from an underdeveloped country should be cause for alarm.”¹⁶

In 2010, Prime Minister Kan approved the “dynamic defense strategy” that re-positioned air defense, signal intelligence and submarine forces to Okinawa, closer to the troubled maritime area with China.¹⁷ This strategy also calls for lighter and more mobile forces and the creation of an amphibious warfare unit. The principal driver of this policy change was China’s stated maritime ambitions and their unprecedented, and largely secretive, military modernization program. This continues to be viewed as a challenge to the vital sea lines of communication that serve the resource-deprived nation. Japan depends on imports for 82 percent of its energy supply and the contested Senkaku Islands region may hold significant energy reserves. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that the East China Sea holds as much as 100 million barrels of oil and one to two trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proven and probable reserves, but the area is underexplored and “the territorial disputes surrounding ownership of potentially rich oil and natural gas deposits have precluded further development.”¹⁸

In December 2011 Japan implemented a major policy change by lifting its 40-year ban on arms exports in conjunction with announcing its purchase of 42 Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to replace its aging Air Self Defense Force fleet. Under the “three principles” of arms export controls Japan would not export arms to “communist bloc countries, countries subject to arms exports embargo under the United

Nations Security Council's resolutions, and countries involved in or likely to be involved in international conflicts.”¹⁹ Despite this ban, Japan has voraciously developed and deployed advanced military technology over the past decades to include missile defense and advanced aircraft technology, and it expects to receive several F-35 component sub-contracts. The strict arms export policy has also been used to showcase Japan’s commitment to its pacifist constitution and allay fears of its own military build-up among its East Asian neighbors. Japan’s policy shift away from arms export bans not only presents economic opportunity for Japan, but also signals a further shift towards normalization and an increasing willingness to challenge the boundaries of its constitution. This is evidenced in Japan’s pledging to provide patrol boats to coastal states in the region, including the Philippines.²⁰

In spite of the significant increases in Japan’s defensive capabilities, arms export reforms and a demonstrated willingness to participate in multi-national operations, many critics argue that alliance planners have not aligned national objectives into a coherent regional security strategy, nor achieved the interoperability necessary to operationalize the alliance. Both the U.S. and Japan have also failed to shape the region to accept a normalized Japan as part of a future collective security environment. Richard Lawless, former Undersecretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, stated that Japan is unwilling to “undertake meaningful security obligations regionally and globally” and that “the government conveys uncertainty and indecision and exhibits a near total lack of urgency to craft a viable national security strategy.”²¹ Regarding the Article 9 constitutional restraints, Mike Finnegan, a Senior Research Associate at the National Bureau of Asian Research, stated, “Without amending the constitution and the language

of Article 9, any changes in the JSDF status or capabilities would require tremendous political effort.”²² Much of the recent alliance reform has centered on re-structuring the U.S. force defense posture in the region and continuing JSDF deployments in support of U.N. humanitarian missions. While these are important, they have also served as a distraction to the critical requirements of establishing alliance roles and missions, enhancing interoperability and implementing relevant constitutional reforms necessary for providing an operational framework for regional collective defense.

U.S. Japan Alliance Reforms

Determine U.S. – Japan Roles and Responsibilities

If nothing else, the Senkaku Island territorial dispute should alert both American and Japanese leaders of the need to codify what roles and missions each nation should perform in the defense of Japan. Both nations have acknowledged the need to have these discussions for many years. The 2005 joint statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) noted Japan’s efforts to respond to emerging regional threats and highlighted “the need to continue examining the roles, missions and capabilities of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. Armed Forces required to respond effectively to diverse challenges in a well coordinated manner.”²³ Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto repeated this nearly verbatim six years later at the 2011 Security 2+2 meeting,²⁴ as did Defense Secretary Panetta in September 2012. But this has not yet happened. The U.S forces should have specific roles assigned in the defense of Japan. “With the goal of operational competency and eventual USFJ-JSDF joint task force capability in mind, the United States should allocate greater responsibility and sense of mission to United States Forces Japan (USFJ).”²⁵

As a globally inter-dependent world blurs the lines between defense of Japan and defending U.S.-Japan regional interests, a review of roles and missions should also include expanding the role Japan plays in maritime defense alongside the U.S. and regional partners. As the third largest oil importer, it is in Japan's vital interests to ensure access to the global commons not only regionally, but also internationally. China's claims in the East China Sea and nearly the entire South China Sea may directly threaten Japan's sea lines of communication. Furthermore, Iran's threat to close the Straits of Hormuz, while not a regional challenge, creates an equally dangerous scenario. The U.S. has responded to these challenges with conceptual development of an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) counter-strategy and the Japanese have introduced the concept of Dynamic Defense. But it is clear that "the new environment requires significantly greater jointness and interoperability across services in both countries and bilaterally between the United States and Japan."²⁶ This involves integrating ships, satellites, air defenses, anti-submarine and electronic warfare capabilities from long distances with precision.

Increase Interoperability

The U.S. Navy has achieved high levels of interoperability with the JMSDF through annual maritime bilateral exercises and the Air Force has also made significant progress with Japan's Air Self Defense Force (JASDF), but U.S. Army and Marine Corps' cooperation with Japan's Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) has been limited due to U.S. pre-occupation with wars in the middle east, and Japan's mission focus nearly exclusively on humanitarian and disaster response activities.²⁷ Despite the success of Operation Tomodachi in March 2011, several shortfalls were indentified in the JSDF internal command relationships and with USFJ. Internally, the JSDF did not

function as a fully integrated staff, resulting in “fragmentation and stove piping along Service and independent Army command lines.”²⁸ As a CJTF, the USFJ and JSDF suffered from an inability to establish and share computer network services. Once established, information sharing was hindered by USFJ’s use of a classified network not accessible by the JSDF counterparts. “Discussions over both the guidelines of information sharing and the rules for information disclosure are necessary.”²⁹ A report by the Center for Strategic Studies, published in the Japan Times, noted that the success of the operation could only be attributed to the fact that it was a peacetime mission, confined only to Japan without enemy interference. Specifically, the lack of secure communications was “not means that would be effective or reliable in scenarios where an enemy is attempting to intercept communications.”³⁰

Combined training between U.S. ground forces and the JGSDF is increasing. During Exercise Keen Sword 2013, JGSDF personnel observed a U.S. Marine amphibious landing at Camp Schwab on Okinawa. In September 2012, elements of III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) conducted combined amphibious assault training near Guam in which 40 members of the JGSDF executed helicopter-borne and amphibious raids to simulate the capture of island airfield and port facilities. Eiji Kimizuka, the JGSDF Chief of Staff stated, “until now, we haven’t paid much attention to island defense...Our capability for amphibious landing – the area of expertise for the Marines – is severely limited.”³¹

In order to improve interoperability in the future, JSDF and U.S. forces should continue expanding the JSDF leadership role in the CJTF arena as well as improving classified information sharing and command, control, computers and intelligence (C4I)

compatibility. As the U.S. broadens its force posture throughout the Pacific to areas such as northern Australia, New Zealand, Guam and the Philippines, efforts should be made to include Japan in multi-national maritime expeditionary exercises to accelerate the development of Japan's amphibious capabilities and capacity.

Collective Defense and Constitutional Reform

Amending Japan's constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote in both houses of parliament, as well as a national referendum. According to a poll conducted in April 2012, 55% of the Japanese respondents do not want to reform Article 9 of the constitution.³² However, as the Japanese become increasingly aware of the regional security challenges and the conceivable threats they pose; public support for constitutional reform is increasing. Leaders from both the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the liberal Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) are arguing for increasing Japan's military role in regional security. In a visit to the White House in April 2012, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda stated "Japan will promote...enhancement of its defense posture in the area, including the Southwestern Islands, in coordination with the U.S. strategy of focusing on the Asia-Pacific Region."³³

In December 2012, Japan elected the hawkish LDP leader and former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe based on a platform of economic revival and standing up to an increasingly assertive China.³⁴ As Prime Minister in 2007, Mr. Abe had unsuccessfully attempted constitutional reform to strengthen Japan's military and allow the nation to exercise the right of collective defense with the United States. This inflamed opponents from within Japan who accused him of being a hard-line nationalist who would threaten the post-war values and ideals that had brought peace and prosperity to the country.³⁵ His controversial positions on World War II revisionism have also made him extremely

unpopular among Japan's East Asian neighbors, China and South Korea. He had previously led efforts to downplay atrocities committed by Japanese troops during WWII in school texts and in 2007 asserted there was no evidence that the Japanese military forced women into sexual slavery during the war. This resulted in the U.S. House of Representatives passing a non-binding resolution for Japan to acknowledge and apologize for its past atrocities committed in WWII.³⁶ Showing no signs of remorse, in October of 2012 Mr. Abe visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo that honors Japan's war dead, to include convicted war criminals.

The conservative leadership of Japan, coupled with an increasingly nationalist sentiment among the people, could provide the motivation for constitutional reform necessary to create a balanced alliance. But there may be limits to how much support the U.S. can expect from the Japanese. The nation's people remain cautious and skeptical of any military applications in support of overseas entanglements. Dr. Robert Eldridge, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Government and External Affairs for the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa, contends that Japan's citizenry have gradually shifted from anti-militarist views to a more defensive realist position. This is largely due to Chinese and North Korean missile tests and maritime provocation as well as the shock of global terrorism and the events of 9/11. He concludes that while Japan will likely increase capabilities for territorial defense, it is unlikely take on a greater military role in joint operations that are far from home and not related to territorial defense.³⁷

This is not necessarily a bad thing as Japan's participation in various international operations may be a distraction from more meaningful reforms. Japanese politicians have spent significant political capital generating support for deploying JSDF

troops with little relative gain in the larger security environment. According to Jim Thomas, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans and Resources, “The security threats facing Japan are real and they are evolving to challenge Japan’s security more directly. Such threats demand a more credible combined military posture.”³⁸ Japanese leaders should pursue reforms that enable regional collective defense in support of Japan’s national interests. This includes maritime security operations, combined ballistic missile defense and limited force projection capabilities with the constitutional authority to protect not only Japan’s national interests, but also those of its regional partners and the United States. The U.S. should encourage Japan’s participation and leadership in multi-national regional maritime security operations in addition to the deployments of JSDF personnel in ancillary operations.

Shaping the Regional Environment for Japan’s Normalization

Japan’s Historical Accountability

Just as the present Japanese conservative leadership and rising national sentiment may provide the driving force for proactive constitutional and alliance reforms; it also poses the greatest threat to the existence of regional security. If accountability for its brutal past and the need for reconciliation with its former WWII enemies are not acknowledged, Japan may further alienate her regional neighbors and potential partners. This history of brutal occupation with China, South Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines remains unresolved in many respects because of American domination of Japan’s foreign affairs after World War II. Between 1945 and 1952 Japan had no sovereignty and no diplomatic relations. “One of the most pernicious aspects of the occupation was that the Asian peoples who had suffered the most from imperial Japan’s depredations – the Chinese, Koreans Indonesians and Filipinos – had no serious role,

no influential presence at all in the defeated land.”³⁹ This unresolved business complicates regional relations today through political mistrust and periodically inflamed nationalist sentiment against Japan that subsequently affects the interests of her only ally – the United States.

The Chinese view Japan’s growing defense capabilities and increasingly outward looking foreign policy as threatening and it has likewise taken a more aggressive stance toward Japan. The more aggressive U.S. defense posture around the world and the oftentimes-hostile expressions of American concerns over the rise of China have left the Chinese feeling disrespected and threatened to a degree.⁴⁰ They have subsequently taken a less cooperative tone that has raised tensions regionally and in the international community. The establishment of a ballistic missile defense capability for Japan has been a resounding success, but has also raised fears and suspicion among the Chinese who feel this capability has emboldened Japan to challenge Chinese territorial claims. Shi Yinhong, a professor of international studies at Renmin University in Beijing, and senior Chinese international affairs official summed up Chinese fears stating, “The joint missile defense system objectively encourages Japan to keep an aggressive position in the Diaoyu [Senkaku] Islands dispute, which sends China a very negative message.”⁴¹

The Senkaku islands, located 120 miles southwest of Okinawa, consist of five uninhabited islets and three rocks claimed by China, Taiwan and Japan. The disputes involve overlapping claims of territorial sovereignty and maritime rights that encompasses vital sea lines of communication for international trade. In addition to the fertile fishing grounds, the areas may also hold vast reserves of natural gas and oil – resources vital to the economic wellbeing of all regional claimants. Since 2008, there

have been increasing confrontations between China and Japan as each attempts to stake and defend their physical claims. China claims it has historical sovereignty over the islands and that they were annexed illegally by Japan at the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. After WWII, Japan was stripped of all its foreign possessions; however, the Senkakus were not specifically identified in the Cairo Declaration. Japan claims the islands were occupied prior to the Sino-Japanese war and therefore were not annexed illegally and not subject to the treaty. The Chinese assert that the United States condoned the illegal annexation through a “backroom deal” in the Okinawa Reversion Agreement of 1971 in which the U.S. gave Japan “any and all powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction ... over the Ryukyu Islands and Daito Islands.”⁴² China believes that the agreement is “completely illegal” and “it can by no means change [China’s] territorial sovereignty over the Diaoyu Dao Islands.”⁴³

Regardless of the legitimacy of each claimant’s arguments, the issue is also a reminder of Japan’s brutal occupation of China in the first half of the 20th century. This contentious history combined with current territorial claims raise the ire of Chinese nationalists who believe that Japan never properly atoned for its offenses after WWII. Periodic official visits by Japanese leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine that inters Japan’s most egregious war criminals along with the whitewashed Japanese textbooks that glorify Japan’s war effort continue to inflame anti-Japanese sentiment. These actions reinforce a belief in the region that the Japanese feel no remorse for their WWII atrocities and facilitate hostile nationalist sentiments that encourage confrontation and threaten continued stability in the region.

The challenges associated with Japan's past aggressions are not limited to China. South Korea also has unresolved issues related with Japan's transgressions during WWII. Seoul's War and Human Rights Museum, opened in May 2012 with government funding, illustrates many of Japan's abuses to include the forced use of 'comfort women' during the war. During the same month, the South Korean Supreme Court ruled in favor of a controversial claim for compensation by former Korean workers conscripted by the Japanese during WWII. Japan has a bitter territorial dispute with South Korea as well. In August, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited the Dokdo/Takeshima islands and later stated that Emperor Akihito should apologize to Korean independence fighters from the Japanese era of occupation.⁴⁴

While it is unlikely Japan and South Korea would go to war over historical issues or territorial claims, it does open a rift for China to exploit. Not only by correlating the China - Japan territorial disputes with those between Japan and South Korea and Russia, but also in questioning the value of any potential Japan – Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance. Zhou Yongsheng, professor of Japanese studies at the China Foreign Affairs University, summed it up saying “such a military alliance will not only fail to improve security...but also risk an even bigger confrontation, which the ROK is not ready to face, because it is targeted at three countries: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, China and Russia.”⁴⁵

Options for Regional Reconciliation

Given Japan's rise in diplomatic and military power in East Asia and the implications of normalization and constitutional reform on regional security, resolving these historic animosities between China and South Korea should be a major priority. Establishing trust with its neighbors is a critical condition necessary before Japan

realizes full normalization of its military and constitution. Japan's transparency in clearly defining its regional objectives along with finding common ground from which to cooperate will go a long way in achieving this goal. This is especially true for U.S – Japan – ROK relations since these three democracies share common values and interests.

Two areas where these interests intersect are nuclear energy and overseas development assistance.⁴⁶ Both Japan and ROK should be interested in international rules for nuclear energy safeguards, non-proliferation activities, and standards of transparency. As China's rise is accompanied by its rank as a nuclear power, Japan and South Korea should find common ground for cooperation on safe nuclear power and defining responsible international practices. The U.S., Japan and ROK are also major global providers of international assistance. The ROK has a 4000 strong version of the Peace Corps and is a major provider of assistance to Afghanistan and Vietnam. Japan is one of the largest providers of financial assistance to the U.N. "The three allies would benefit from pooling their visions and funds into a collaborative arrangement as they promote strategic development around the world."⁴⁷ There is far more to be gained in regional security with a strong U.S. – Japan –ROK relationship. The U.S. should focus diplomatic efforts on minimizing historical animosities and territorial disputes between its two allies and encourage Japan to acknowledge its past and make amends where politically feasible.

Japan's relationship with China is more complex given their history and conflicting regional objectives. Both nations agree that regional stability and economic cooperation is vital to their national interests. Rather than focusing on the differences

and friction points, the U.S. and Japan should concentrate diplomatic efforts on the common interests that are shared with China. Specifically, they should focus on the economic prosperity that may come from regional stability and international trade and investment. Last year, China was Japan's largest trading partner and Japan was the largest international investor in China employing about ten million Chinese.⁴⁸ Further, Japanese innovation and specialization in electronics coupled with the manufacturing capacity of China have benefited both economies immensely. I-phones designed in the United States contain components produced in Japan that are assembled in China.⁴⁹

Japan is also one of the major exporters of energy-sector capital equipment, and has a strong energy research and development (R&D) program supported by the government, which pursues energy efficiency measures domestically in order to increase the country's energy security and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.⁵⁰ Because China has the world's largest population and a rapidly growing economy, its energy consumption continues to rise. Securing access to that energy is a major priority in sustaining its growth. According to the 2010 Joint Operating Environment, in 2030 the global demand for energy will be 50% greater than it is today.⁵¹ China is the world's second largest consumer of oil and the second leading importer of oil. A joint energy security venture between China and Japan could be mutually beneficial by increasing China's energy efficiency and developing domestic sources of energy for Japan that the Senkaku territorial disputes have continually unhinged.

Last year, a decision by the Japanese government to purchase the disputed islands from private Japanese owners - an earnest effort to prevent escalation - sparked protests in at least 85 Chinese cities resulting in attacks on several Japanese

businesses.⁵² Some critics argued that the Chinese government backed the nationalist protests in part to prevent criticism of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in advance of its power transition at the 18th Communist Party Congress. When the protests threatened to turn against the government, they were quickly put down. The real danger, according to many Chinese analysts, is the threat of losing Japan's foreign investment at a time when China's economy is shrinking.⁵³

Creatively negotiating on the Senkaku territorial dispute is perhaps the most urgent requirement to ease tensions between China and Japan. By offering to negotiate on the territory, Japan may prevent the Chinese government from using Japan as an international distraction from its domestic issues and it could free Chinese leadership to negotiate on what might otherwise be non-negotiable issues under the lingering fears of Japanese imperialism. Retired Chinese diplomat, Chen Jian, summed up these fears in October 2012 calling the islands dispute a "time bomb planted by the U.S." and that the U.S. urging Japan to take on a greater regional security role "suits the purpose of the right wing in Japan more than perfectly."⁵⁴ That perceived purpose being territorial aspirations beyond Japan's historic borders. Negotiating on the Senkakus, focusing on strengthening economic interdependence and seeking mutually beneficial resource development ventures may help to avoid the potential for conflict, even as Japan normalizes.

Conclusion

While Japan continues to debate the merits of constitutional reform and is increasingly drawn toward re-militarization and 'normalcy' through fears of China's rise and periodic provocations by North Korea, several key ingredients of a solid U.S.-Japan alliance remain unanswered. Determining U.S. and Japanese roles and responsibilities

in defending Japan has long been indentified as a requirement but has yet to happen. Formally establishing these roles and responsibilities would allow the combined U.S.-Japan forces to develop capable staffs, create realistic operational plans and credibly exercise those plans. Both nations can then increase the interoperability of forces necessary to effectively operate as a coalition. Amending Article 9 of Japan's constitution, specifically to allow the right of collective defense, would pave the way for Japan to participate in, and ultimately lead, multi-national security operations vital to the continued security and stability of the region.

As the Japanese political environment continues to favor constitutional reform, U.S. and Japanese leaders should focus on shaping the regional environment to accommodate a rising Japan. Japan's reconciliation with China and South Korea is a critical precursor to normalization and can only be achieved by Japan acknowledging and atoning for its brutal past. For its part, the U.S. should foster multi-lateral cooperation by concentrating diplomatic and economic efforts on common regional goals and interests. Through these efforts, the alliance can be strengthened in meaningful ways that will enable the U.S. – Japan mutual defense treaty to live up to its billing as the cornerstone of regional security and stability in the Asia-Pacific.

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